

ARNOLD ARBORETUM
HARVARD UNIVERSITYBULLETIN
OF POPULAR INFORMATION

SERIES 4. VOL. V

APRIL 23, 1937

NUMBER 2

SOME SINGLE FLOWERING JAPANESE CHERRIES

WHEN the Japanese cherries bloom in the spring they always lend a touch of exotic beauty and fragrance which is unsurpassed by any other group of flowering trees. In America the public is becoming increasingly conscious of their beauty, and because of the wide publicity given the plantings in Washington many cities and civic organizations are starting local collections. One of the most recent of these, and perhaps the largest, is in the Fairmount Park System of Philadelphia.

Japanese cherries were introduced into America approximately one hundred years ago. Prior to that time it was most difficult to send plant material of any kind out of Japan. In 1846 the old Ellwanger and Barry Nursery Company of Rochester, New York, listed a Japanese cherry in its catalogue, and this was probably the first time any were offered in America. It is probable that the variety first grown here was the pendulous form of *Prunus subhirtella*. In 1912 the Mayor of the city of Tokyo presented to the city of Washington as a token of friendship two thousand Japanese cherry trees, which have done much to promote American interest in these plants. Many of them were planted in Potomac Park in Washington where they are now creating nation-wide interest each spring when they bloom.

Unfortunately, most of the double-flowering Japanese cherries should be considered as comparatively short-lived trees. This is particularly true of many of the double-flowered forms, which often have to be replaced about every fifteen years. Under favorable growing conditions they may last considerably longer, but it is well to consider them as a short-lived group in order to avoid later disappointment. The Sargent cherry is the exception. This is the hardiest of all

and grows to a sizable tree of a ripe old age. One of the first plants in this country, introduced forty-six years ago, is still growing in the Arnold Arboretum and is in perfect condition.

In the colder sections of the United States the Japanese cherries are not hardy, but in general they may be considered as doing well in those places where peaches are hardy. In southern Maine, for instance, they cannot be expected to do well although in the states bordering the Great Lakes, where the temperatures are somewhat moderated, there are some excellent plantings. In the drier portions of the mid-west they soon succumb, but on the Pacific Coast they thrive from Washington to southern California. Even as far south as the middle of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi they are perfectly at home.

Propagation. Formerly it was advocated that the best understock for Japanese cherries was that of the Sargent cherry, *Prunus Sargenti*, formerly called *Prunus serrulata sachalinensis*.

Mr. William H. Judd, Propagator at the Arnold Arboretum, after long experience with these plants, now feels that the use of *Prunus avium* as an understock is perfectly satisfactory. This understock "works" slightly better than that of the Sargent cherry and is certainly much more easily obtained. It is widely used for this purpose by many nurserymen. Particular forms of *Prunus subhirtella* can be grafted on seedlings of this species. *Prunus yedoensis* may be grown from cuttings or grafted on *P. avium* stock. All double-flowered varieties can be grafted on *P. avium* stock. There are certain species which can be readily grown from seed, and would include *P. Sargenti*, *P. incisa*, *P. nipponica*, and often even the hybrid, *P. yedoensis* although in this species the plants do not always come true from seed. The Arboretum wishes to modify certain statements which have been made in the past in this Bulletin regarding understock for Japanese cherries and emphatically states that *P. avium* as an understock has certainly proved as good if not better than *P. Sargenti*.

Prunus Sargenti. Introduced about 1890 from seeds sent to the Arboretum by William S. Bigelow, this fast growing tree has proved the most hardy of all the Japanese cherries. It is the tallest, being a fair-sized tree, and is the only one of all the Japanese cherries that has any autumn color. This is a good deep red. The flowers are deep pink and single. It is one of the first Japanese cherries to bloom, usually opening before or at about the same time as the leaves appear. Because of its size, its hardiness, and its attractiveness in both spring and fall, this cherry is proving a valuable ornamental and is



PLATE III

Prunus Sargentii (formerly *P. serrulata sachalinensis*)

This is the largest and hardiest of all the Japanese cherries. It may be either upright and pyramidal in form (as in foreground) or considerably more rounded (see other tree at rear of bench).

deserving of much wider use.

Prunus yedoensis. The Yoshino cherry is another one of the single-flowered forms and makes up the greatest part of the display at Washington, since almost half of the original gift from Tokyo was of this variety. Professor Sargent wrote of this tree in 1922 that it was one of the favorites in Japan and before the earthquake in that year there were over 250,000 trees in Tokyo alone. The Sargent cherry is often upright in habit, but the Yoshino is more spreading. It has pale pink flowers which sometimes are almost white and can be combined with the Sargent cherry for general landscape effect, for the flowers of both open at approximately the same time.

Prunus subhirtella. The Higan cherry is perhaps the most floriferous of all. Its single flowers are borne in the greatest profusion, and it is not unusual to find the branches literally covered by the blossoms. There is wide variation in the shapes of individual trees when grown from seed, but as a rule they are small and of very bushy habit with pale pink blossoms. All cherries, of course, are used most effectively in front of an evergreen background of pine or hemlock wherever such planting is possible.

Perhaps the most common cherry planted now is the drooping form of the Higan cherry, *Prunus subhirtella pendula*. Another outstanding form is *Prunus subhirtella autumnalis*, which often has a second bloom in the fall though at that season it is not particularly outstanding. Last spring a large tree of this variety was more attractive than any of the other cherries in the Arboretum. Its light pink, semi-double flowers are most outstanding. If the crop of flowers in the spring is unusually large, then the number of flowers in the fall will be very small. This tree is another good type and should be used a great deal more in combination with the early blooming single-flowered types.

FIELD CLASS AT ARBORETUM DURING MAY

A Field Class will be conducted Saturday mornings during May to assist those who wish to gain a more intimate knowledge of the flowering trees and shrubs growing in the Arnold Arboretum. The class will meet from 10:00 a.m. to noon, is open to anyone who is interested, and will meet at the Forest Hills Entrance of the Arnold Arboretum for the first time on Saturday, May 1.

Registration for the course is one dollar, payable in advance by mail.

DONALD WYMAN